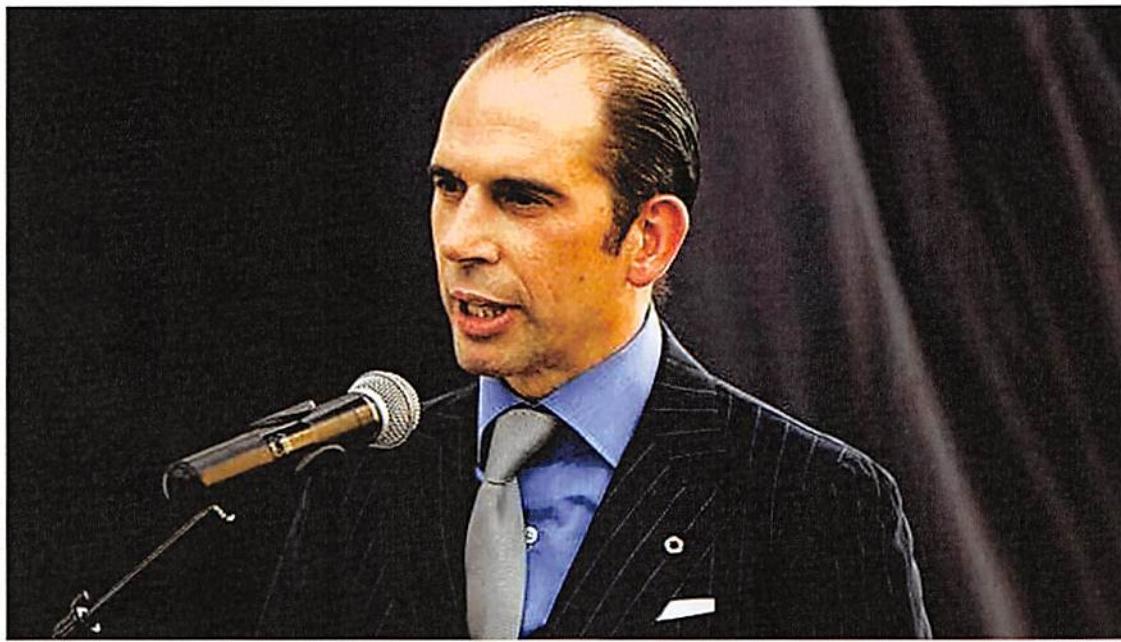


11/01/2024, 13:13

Tory donor charged in Puerto Rico bribery scheme

**Financial fraud****Tory donor charged in Puerto Rico bribery scheme**

Venezuelan financier Julio Herrera Velutini has given more than £500,000 since Boris Johnson became UK prime minister



Julio Herrera Velutini relocated to London in recent years

Cynthia O'Murchu, Stefania Palma and Jasmine Cameron-Chileshe AUGUST 5 2022

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US authorities have charged a significant donor to the Tory party, alleging that he illegally provided campaign donations to a former governor of Puerto Rico in a scheme to remove a senior banking regulator from his post.

The charges brought by the US Department of Justice against Julio Herrera Velutini, a Venezuelan banker who relocated to London in recent years, threaten to rekindle controversy over Tory party fundraising.

He has donated more than half a million pounds to the party since Boris Johnson took office, including £100,000 days before the 2019 general election. The donations were made through Britannia Financial, the Venezuelan financier's London-based financial services group, which has not been accused of wrongdoing.

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Tory donor charged in Puerto Rico bribery scheme

More recently, Britannia Financial sponsored the platinum jubilee Pageant, which marked the 70-year anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne.

Herrera Velutini was on Thursday charged with conspiracy, federal programs bribery and honest services wire fraud, for his alleged role in providing campaign funding to the former governor of Puerto Rico, Wanda Vázquez Garced, ahead of the US territory's 2020 gubernatorial election.

Vázquez Garced was arrested on Thursday by the FBI and accused of accepting the bribes while in office. The indictment, filed on Wednesday, alleges Herrera Velutini wanted Vázquez Garced to help quash a probe into his Puerto Rico-based lender Bancredito, which is referred to as "the Bank" in the filing.

Herrera Velutini and an adviser allegedly paid more than \$300,000 to political consultants in support of Vázquez Garced's campaign, according to the indictment. In return, she officially requested the resignation of the then commissioner for the island's financial regulator in order to appoint a replacement who had been picked by Herrera Velutini, the DoJ alleged.

OCIF, Puerto Rico's financial regulator, had been probing Bancredito since 2019 and last December imposed penalties on the bank. Bancredito did not respond to a request for comment.

Bancredito's former chief executive and a political consultant who worked on Vázquez's 2020 campaign each "pledged guilty to conspiring with Herrera Velutini and others to bribe Public Official A" in March, according to the DOJ.

Representatives for Britannia Financial and Herrera Velutini did not provide any on-record comment.

The charges against Herrera Velutini threaten to put further pressure on the Conservative party and its chair Ben Elliot, whose energetic fundraising efforts have attracted controversy.

During Elliot's tenure, which began in July 2019, the Tory party accepted contentious donations — including from the wife of Vladimir Putin's former finance minister — which have led opposition leader Keir Starmer to call for his resignation.

Elliot — the well-connected nephew of Prince Charles' wife, Camilla — has also faced questions over links between his businesses and his campaign fundraising.

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Tory donor charged in Puerto Rico bribery scheme

The Financial Times last year reported that a number of clients of Hawthorn Advisors, a PR firm co-founded by Elliot — including Herrera's Britannia Financial Group — made substantial donations to the Conservative party since Elliot took over responsibility for fundraising.

Herrera's executive assistant at Britannia previously worked for Elliot, according to her LinkedIn profile, which has since been redacted. Elliot stepped down as a Hawthorn director in April 2020. Hawthorn declined to comment.

If convicted on all charges, Vázquez Garced, Herrera Velutini and his consultant each face a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, according to US authorities.

A lawyer for Vázquez Garced said that she was "absolutely and totally innocent of all the charges against her" and planned to defend her case at trial.

A Conservative party spokesperson said: "Donations to the Conservative party are properly and transparently declared to the Electoral Commission, openly published by them and comply fully with the law."

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Politics

## Banker at Center of Puerto Rico Corruption Scandal Denies Guilt

- Bancredito founder Julio Herrera was arraigned in San Juan
- Herrera is accused of bribing former Gov. Wanda Vazquez



Former Governor Wanda Vazquez in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in June 2020. *Photographer: Ricardo Arduengo/AFP/Getty Images*

By [Jim Wyss](#)

31 August 2022 at 20:25 BST

 This article is for **subscribers only**.

The Venezuelan financier in the middle of a Puerto Rican bribery scandal that led to the indictment of the island's former governor has declared himself not guilty to a laundry list of federal corruption charges.

Julio Martin Herrera Velutini, the founder of Bancredito International Bank & Trust Corp., appeared before a judge in San Juan Wednesday. He was subsequently released on a \$1 million bond and will await trial at his home in New York.

The government alleges that Herrera -- working through former FBI agent Mark Rossini -- offered to finance the 2020 election campaign of then-Governor Wanda Vazquez if she would fire the head of the Office of the Commissioner of Financial Institutions of Puerto Rico. The office had been investigating Bancredito since 2019.

11/01/2024, 15:51

Banker at Center of Puerto Rico Corruption Scandal Denies Guilt - Bloomberg

The government says Vazquez complied and named a new commissioner in May 2020 who was “a former consultant for the international bank owned by Herrera.”

**Read more: Puerto Rico’s Former Governor Arrested on Bribery Charges**

Vazquez and Rossini have also said they are not guilty of the charges.

Herrera is facing seven counts, including federal grand bribery, federal program bribery, conspiracy, honest services fraud and honest services wire fraud. The fraud charges alone each carry a 20-year maximum prison sentence.

Bancredito, founded in 2009 and based in Puerto Rico, is in the process of voluntary liquidation.

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12/01/2024, 16:17

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# Banker in bribe scandal pleads not guilty in Puerto Rico

BY DÁNICA COTO

Published 8:02 PM GMT, August 31, 2022

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — An international banker accused of bribing Puerto Rico's then-governor to undermine an investigation into his institution turned himself in on Wednesday, almost a month after he was charged in federal court.

Julio Herrera Velutini, who is a citizen of Venezuela and Italy and who was thought to be living in the United Kingdom, pleaded not guilty hours after he was arrested in Puerto Rico and was ordered held on a \$1 million secured bond.

Herrera faces several charges, including bribery and honest services wire fraud — which implies a third party being harmed by the bribery or kickbacks.

Federal authorities said the Puerto Rico-based Bancredito International Bank & Trust that Herrera owned came under scrutiny in 2019 when Puerto Rico's Office of the Commissioner of Financial Institutions began probing suspicious transactions that the bank did not report.

Officials alleged that Herrera and a former FBI agent who served as his consultant promised to financially support former Gov. Wanda Vázquez's 2020 campaign for governor if she dismissed the commissioner and appointed a new one of Herrera's choosing.

Authorities said Vázquez accepted the bribe, demanded the commissioner's resignation and appointed a former consultant for Herrera's bank as the new commissioner in May 2020.

Officials said Herrera and Mark Rossini, the ex-FBI agent, then paid more than \$300,000 to political consultants to support Vázquez's campaign.

Rossini, who was in Spain and turned himself in days after he was accused, has pleaded not guilty. Vázquez was arrested in Puerto Rico and was released on a \$50,000 unsecured bond after pleading not guilty.

The judge, Giselle López-Soler, allowed Herrera to live in New York ahead of the trial, adding that he must surrender his passport once he arrives. His bank is in the process of being liquidated.